

SAPC - 17779
Copy 1 of 7

Cover

26 July 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Project Director *B/m*
THROUGH : Project Director of Administration *ACX*
SUBJECT : Proposed Cover Modifications

1. The recent rather damaging publicity which appeared in the July issue of the RAF FLYING REVIEW has led to various discussions which, if titled, would all come under the heading of "Where do we go from here." I do believe, however, that these discussions may not have been entirely wasted conversation for an idea has been cultivated. It is recognized that the proposal which follows does involve considerable risk. I do not, however, want to overlook, particularly at such a critical point of our operations, even the most obvious risk for this would be only one person's opinion on the merits of an idea.

2. It has been mentioned that, by necessity, we may now have to release a statement that the altitude capability of the U-2 has been increased to the 60,000 feet area. I have given considerable thought to such a suggestion and have taken the liberty of discussing same with Mr. Walter T. Bonney of NACA. In so doing, however, I have not solicited his approval or disapproval but have merely inquired of him as to the means in which this could be accomplished.

3. This idea does, I believe, have certain merit if handled properly. Mr. Bonney believes that any announcement of this sort should come from within the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation rather than from NACA. Lockheed could indicate that their research, with this aircraft as a test bed, has enabled them, through modification, to increase the craft's capability. Such research would, of course, have been conducted as a joint effort with ARDC at Edwards Air Force Base.

4. I do not propose that we set the figure at exactly 60,000 feet but rather put the figure at 61,258 feet. For your information, the record for a single engine turbo jet, according to the records of

The Federal Aviation Internationale, is 59,445 feet established in Britain by John Cunningham on 23 March 1948 in a Vampire Mark II with a De Haviland Ghost engine. The official multi-engine record was also established in Britain by Walter F. Gibb on 29 August 1955 flying a Canberra to an altitude of 65,889 feet. Apparently there is no distinction between single and multi-engine craft in the establishment of a record. NACA advises that the Canberra record is considered to be the current record for a "turbo" jet.

5. In utilizing the 61,258 feet mark as our "unofficial" record, we would be remaining under the official mark by almost 5,000 feet thus not causing unusual concern in aviation circles. The manner in which such information is released is of the most extreme importance. I feel it should be wide-spread but in a rather easy and quiet manner. How this will be accomplished is a matter yet to be resolved. I might note as an initial suggestion, that Lockheed could print such a story in their plant magazine, THE LOCKHEED STAR, without any further dissemination outside of the plant. It is my understanding that this publication receives considerable distribution among the trade magazines and with their continued interest in the U-2 they may choose to reprint the Lockheed article as a quote.

6. The advantages to announcing an increased altitude capability would be several. We would now be able to reach an area yet to be explored by NACA in their research program. Any extended use of the current NACA facilities could be stated to be for the purpose of exploring the areas between 55,000 and 62,000 feet within the new limits of the U-2. This could give at least an additional 6 months, if not longer, life to our current detachments under the same cover as has been used in the past. It would not be necessary to actually explore these regions as we already have sufficient data on file at Langley Field under Top Secret classification. This material could be declassified and actual research study papers prepared.

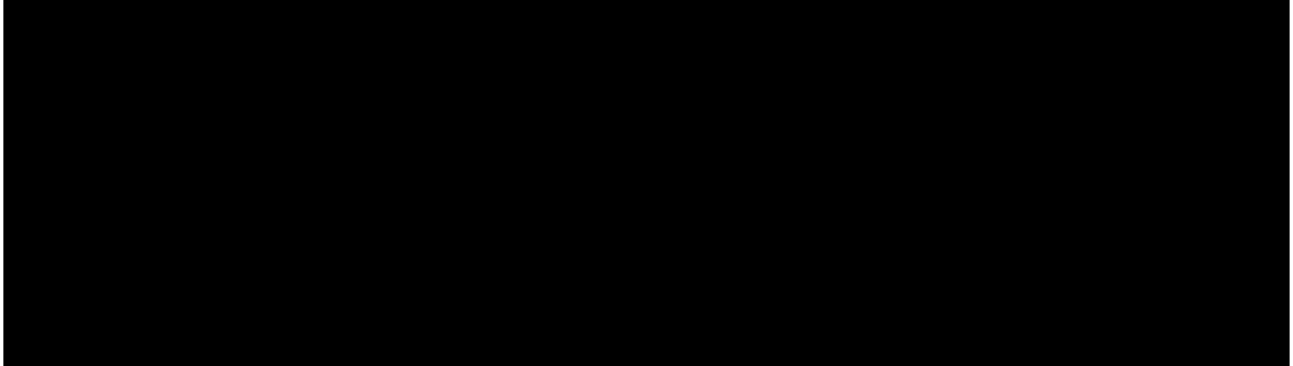
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8. The risk which I referred to earlier is that an increase in our capability may possibly result in some publication wanting to do a feature story on the U-2. It is for this reason that I recommend caution in the manner in which such announcement would be made. In the past we have attempted to suppress publicity concerning the U-2, publicizing only that information necessary to support our cover program. Practically every article of uncontrolled publicity has stated our altitude capability at 65,000 feet. We would have to be extremely careful not to leave the impression that such articles have caused us to attempt to cover-up this fact. We may be able to combat such suspicions by indicating that our increased altitude capability was obtained only through a loss of speed at such altitude thus on one hand showing benefit and on the other loss.

9. There are perhaps other difficulties which I do not foresee, therefore, I request your opinion concerning this proposal, and if feasible request that the plan be brought before all senior Project officials for their individual evaluation. If proven to be to our advantage following receipt of such opinions, I propose that a joint meeting be held between ourselves, NACA, Lockheed and the USAF to determine the best manner in placing this information before the general public.



Project Cover Officer

APPROVED:

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Richard M. Bissell, Jr.

TMA:aml (26 July 1957)

- 1 - Addressee ✓
- 2 - Admin
- 3 - Dep Proj Dir

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- 5 - Cover
- 6 - SO Reading
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